

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION



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DECISION MEMO ACTIONS OF A SPECIAL NATURE

Irrigation Communication and Efficiency in the Sun River Watershed - 2021

July 2, 2021

Sun River Watershed Group

Administrative

Sun River Watershed Basin

Cascade, Lewis and Clark, Teton

PURPOSE AND NEED

The Sun River Watershed Group (SRWG) proposes to increase or sustain irrigated agriculture in Montana by improving communication among irrigators and providing a platform for discussion about drought planning and water conservation.

The Sun River supplies water to ~114,000 irrigated acres, provides water for local communities, and supports fish, wildlife, and recreation. Water is managed by irrigation districts, private ditch companies, state and federal agencies, and local municipalities. In many years, as much as 90% of this water comes from outside the watershed, in the form of mountain snowpack. The process for meeting this variety of demands from a limited supply is complex and can be complicated when the various water managers don't understand one another or communicate readily.

Through this project, SRWG will improve communication to coordinate water needs between various users and continue discussion about what "conserved water" means in a practical sense. To do this, SRWG will meet with water users and water managers one-on-one and facilitate group meetings among irrigators and other stream flow stakeholders to encourage a better understanding of Sun River supply and demand for agriculture and other uses, and to foster dialog about long-term water availability and planning.

The Sun River Watershed Group will conduct meeting and facilitate dialogue from date of award to completion of planning, July 2, 2021 through September 30, 2023. Public and stakeholder meeting are to be held at various locations throughout the Sun River basin. (map included)

Explanation of the decision(s) that must be made regarding the proposed action (i.e. approve grant or loan and provide funding):

DNRC will approve the grant to provide funding for the Irrigation Communication and Efficiency in the Sun River Project.

DNRC is not required to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) or an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for actions that qualify for a CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION (ARM 36.17.614) or justified by a PROGRAMMATIC REVIEW; or are ACTIONS OF A SPECIAL NATURE (ARM 36.2.523(5)); or are EMERGENCIES (ARM 36.2.539). These actions are subject to review for EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES that would require an EA or an EIS.

ACTIONS OF SPECIAL NATURE (ARM 36.2.523)

☒ Administrative actions: routine, clerical or similar functions of a department, including but not limited to administrative procurement, contracts for consulting services, and personnel actions.

☐ Minor repairs, operations, or maintenance of existing equipment or facilities.

☐ Investigation and enforcement: data collection, inspection of facilities or enforcement of environmental standards.

☐ Ministerial actions: actions in which the agency exercises no discretion, but rather acts upon a given state of facts in a prescribed manner.

☐ Actions that are primarily social or economic in nature and that do not otherwise affect the human environment.

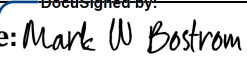
CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION/PROGRAMMATIC REVIEW

☐ Categorical Exclusion (CE) refers to a type of action which does not individually, collectively, or cumulatively require an EA or EIS, as determined by rulemaking or programmatic review adopted by the agency, unless extraordinary circumstances, as defined by rulemaking or programmatic review, occur. This project qualifies under ARM 36.17.614 CATEGORICAL EXCLUSIONS.

☐ Programmatic review means an analysis (EIS or EA) of the impacts on the quality of the human environment of related actions, programs, or policies. DNRC – CARDD does not have any programmatic reviews completed at the time of this template.

The project listed above meets the definition of Actions of a Special Nature, Categorical Exclusion or Programmatic Review including specified conditions and Extraordinary Circumstances.

Prepared By:	Name: Ann L. Kulczyk Title: Program Manager Email: akulczyk@mt.gov	Date: 01/18/2022
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Approved By:	Name: Mark Bostrom Title: CARD Division Administrator
Signature:	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <small>DocuSigned by: BF7A1C50B2AF4DE...</small> </div> <div> Date: 1/21/2022 12:58:58 PM MST </div> </div>

Project Area of Interest Sun River Basin

